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Letter dated 12 May 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter from Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, addressed to you on the current situation regarding the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict (see annex).

I should appreciate it very much if the present letter could be circulated at the earliest possible opportunity to all members of the Security Council and as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Fesseha A. **Tessema**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

00-42883 (E) 120500

Annex to the letter dated 12 May 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I wish to draw your attention to the memorandum of 11 May 2000 from my Minister for Foreign Affairs addressed to you (S/2000/422).

Let me assure you from the outset of our commitment to peace, which is the thrust of our Prime Minister's message to you. However, we are not lucky enough to have it. A rogue State that has no respect for principles of international law has made it impossible for us to have peace with dignity and to put a stop to a war that it has imposed on us since 6 May 1998.

We had an opportunity in Algiers from 29 April to 5 May to return to peace. But Eritrea sabotaged that proximity talks and thereby killed the opportunity for peace that we had so much wanted to seize.

Don't we have a legitimate right, as a victim of aggression, to ask the Security Council to condemn Eritrea's act of aggression against Ethiopia and receive the sympathy of the Council? Even at this late stage, the Security Council can discharge its responsibility, which it has failed to carry out for over two years. Though the Security Council knew that aggression had been committed by Eritrea, the Council chose to ignore this blatant violation of international law by the Eritrean leadership.

It would indeed have made an enormous difference if the Security Council had called upon Eritrea from the outset to reverse its aggression and if it had condemned this flagrant violation of international law. However, under the circumstances, and in the absence of what would have been justified indignation by the international community, Eritrea continued with its aggression against Ethiopia.

Thus encouraged, Eritrea refused also to give peace a chance and continued to reject all peace initiatives. What happened in Algiers recently is the latest confirmation of this. After this latest opportunity for peace was torpedoed by Eritrea, the Security Council pretended, again, that no crime was committed by Eritrea. This is a source of deep anguish for Ethiopia and for our people.

We are saddened that the Security Council did not use this latest opportunity with foresight and with the necessary resolve to press Eritrea to see reason and to return to substantive talks on the basis of the consolidated technical arrangements.

Another opportunity was thus created for Eritrea to continue prevaricating and to escape the blame for the collapse of the Algiers proximity talks that Eritrea wilfully and deliberately foiled.

Can Ethiopia, even at this stage, expect justice from the Security Council? Does the violation of international law in Africa matter to the Security Council? Can we believe that the Security Council abhors aggression wherever it is committed?

It is with regret that I inform you that our experience over the last two years gives us little confidence that we can get, as a victim of aggression, a fair hearing from the Security Council.

But we cannot lose hope. We wish to believe that, even though belatedly, the Council might decide to listen to the victim of aggression and thereby assist us put a stop to this war of aggression that has continued unabated for over two years.

Let me inform you in all sincerity that there is nothing more that Ethiopia wishes than peace. Our commitment to peace is second to none. We value peace. That is why, even though a victim of aggression, we did our best to ensure the peaceful resolution of the crisis that Eritrea has imposed on us. But all our efforts failed because of Eritrea's intransigence. We believe it is never too late to do whatever is necessary for peace. This shall always be Ethiopia's principled position. Thus we remain always ready to assist the Organization of African Unity to help us achieve peace. But Eritrea needs to be persuaded to work for peace without preconditions and to be ready to reverse its aggression.

In the meantime, we call on the Security Council to assist us stop this war and to help us achieve peace with dignity, based on full respect for principles of international law. Justice requires that the Council stop its pretension that aggression was not committed and that Ethiopia is not a victim of aggression. What the Security Council does based on principles will have enormous implication for peace and stability in our subregion.

(*Signed*) Seyoum **Mesfin**
Minister